

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations

**Please note: All articles are available in the attached PDF.*

**To receive the Daily News Digest in your inbox, email R6Press@epa.gov.*

NATIONAL

1 — Biden Climate Promises Bump Against Bureaucracy's Grinding Gears, Bloomberg, 6/29/21

<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/biden-climate-promises-bump-against-bureaucracys-grinding-gears>

The agency that manages car shopping for the federal government hasn't published a promised plan to stock up on electric vehicles. The Agriculture and Interior departments don't have a public strategy to employ thousands of young people to address the threat of climate change. And the Defense Department hasn't determined how it will use the risk of climate change in military simulations and war gaming.

2 — Study: EPA underestimated methane emissions from oil and gas development, The Hill, 6/29/21

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/560751-epa-underestimated-methane-emissions-from-oil-and-gas-development>

EPA has underestimated methane emissions caused by oil and gas production by as much as 76 percent, according to research published Tuesday in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres. Researchers from Pennsylvania State University collected data in the mid-Atlantic, mid-South and central Midwest of the U.S. from 2017 to 2019, tracking the movement of carbon dioxide, methane and ethane within weather systems.

3 — Biden on EVs, rail, energy: 'We are not just tinkering', E&E News, 6/29/21

<https://www.eenews.net/energywire/2021/06/30/stories/1063736161>

Armed with statistics, President Biden yesterday began pitching the public on his bipartisan infrastructure deal. Biden's speech in Wisconsin signaled a delicate new stage for his climate agenda.

4 — Carbon Capture Bills Gathering Steam in Congress, Environmental Health Advisor, 6/30/21

<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/2021/06/carbon-capture-bills-gathering-steam-in-congress/>

Several bills creating benefits and financing for carbon capture have been introduced in Congress and are seeing movement through bipartisan support. Carbon capture, also known as carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration (CCUS), is the process of gathering carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, typically from sources such as coal-fired power plants. Once captured, the greenhouse gas is usually stored or reused so it does not enter the atmosphere, where it is harmful to the environment.

TEXAS

5 — Hazy view in Big Bend? Texas officials don't want any new rules to fix it., Houston Chronicle, 6/30/21

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/environment/article/Hazy-view-in-Big-Bend-Texas-officials-don-t-want-16282949.php>

State environmental regulators are proposing to do nothing new to meet federal rules that require them to manage how hazy it is at certain national parks and wilderness areas, arguing that they're already on track to meet visibility goals. But advocates and researchers criticized how the state reached that conclusion and argue regulators are missing a critical chance to reduce pollution that not only contributes to hazy skies but also can be harmful to human health.

6 — Opinion: Hundreds of lives at stake in TCEQ decision today on haze, Houston Chronicle, 6/30/2021

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Opinion-Hundreds-of-lives-at-stake-in-TCEQ-16282906.php>

Texas power plants emit more haze-forming pollution than those in any other state. The particles that we see as haze also damage our lungs and hearts. The Clean Air Act requires each state to issue a plan for combating that haze over the next decade. Commissioners of the state's environmental agency, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, or TCEQ, will vote on its haze plan today. But the agency's executive director has provided them just one option — do nothing. Texans and the EPA should insist that TCEQ do far more.

LOUISIANA

7 — CITGO agrees to \$19.7 million settlement to mitigate 2006 oil spill in Calcasieu River, New Orleans Times Picayune, 6/30/21

https://www.nola.com/news/courts/article_6db04752-d8f5-11eb-ac0c-77f75830d884.html

CITGO Petroleum Corp. has agreed to pay \$19.7 million to restore natural resources damaged during a 2006 spill of more than 2 million gallons of waste oil and millions of gallons of wastewater into the Calcasieu River estuary from its Westlake refinery, in a consent decree entered into with the U.S. Justice Department and federal and Louisiana state trustees and filed in federal court in Lake Charles.

8 — NASA looks at state delta system, eyes global forecasts, Baton Rouge Advocate, 6/30/21

<https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/2021/06/30/stories/1063736105>

Erosion, sinking land and sea-level rise from climate change have killed the Louisiana woods where a 41-year-old Native American chief played as a child. Not far away in the Mississippi River delta system, middle-school students can stand on islands that emerged the year they were born.

9 — Setting the rules for Louisiana solar projects: Farmers, lobbyists discuss differences in hearings, Baton Rouge Advocate, 6/28/21

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/legislature/article_a32a1bd4-d926-11eb-84da-fb17d5a5a73e.html

Dozens of farmers, lobbyists and representatives for the solar industry started hashing out their differences Tuesday over rules for solar projects that have started popping up across the state, which have sparked pushback from farmers worried they can't compete with the companies for land. Officials with the state Department of Natural Resources held two hearings Tuesday to begin gathering input from the various players. The meetings kicked off a months-long rulemaking process for utility-scale solar projects.

Environment & Energy

Biden Climate Promises Bump Against Bureaucracy's Grinding Gears

By Courtney Rozen

June 30, 2021, 5:01 AM

-
- ◆ Agencies ask Capitol Hill for funds to finish Biden's list
 - ◆ Missed intelligence deadline delays military strategy
-

The agency that manages car shopping for the federal government hasn't published a promised plan to stock up on electric vehicles.

The Agriculture and Interior departments don't have a public strategy to employ thousands of young people to address the threat of climate change.

And the Defense Department hasn't determined how it will use the risk of climate change in military simulations and war gaming.

As President Joe Biden tries to wrangle Capitol Hill and world leaders to take action on climate change, his own administration is missing many of his deadlines to complete items on a lengthy domestic and international climate change to-do list.

Those were deadlines to draft plans—not necessarily to execute them. And there are exceptions.

The president released his climate finance plan and agencies outlined steps to remove fossil fuel subsidies from their budgets, both requests included in Biden's Jan. 27 executive order on climate change. He made climate change discussions a priority at meetings with global leaders in Europe in June, another item in that order.

But otherwise, Biden's ambitious climate agenda, like many of his proposals, is running into a harsh reality: The behemoth federal government is slow to change course, even after an election.

Agencies may also need additional funding to achieve the president's climate change goals after four years of pursuing very different priorities under President Donald Trump. The delays illustrate that Congress isn't the only obstacle to Biden achieving his climate change goals.

"This is something completely different," said Michelle Belco, a professor at the University of Houston who studies executive orders. "This changes the whole direction that the federal government is going with regard to climate change."

Biden directed Cabinet officials "from the beginning" of his presidency to prioritize climate change, said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. But her office declined to comment on what the White House is doing to help agencies meet deadlines on specific tasks in the president's executive orders.

At Home

On a warm day in Michigan earlier this year, Biden zoomed around in an electric version of the Ford Motor Co. F-150, part of the best-selling vehicle line in America.

The self-proclaimed "car guy" gave photographers a visual representation of one of his central promises on climate change—to put more electric vehicles on the road.

But it's been more than two months since Biden's deadline passed for the administration to publish a plan for the federal government to stock up on electric cars, which the White House has repeatedly framed as a way to set an example for the country. The White House has not published the plan as of late June, but a spokesperson for the Council on Environmental Quality said it is reviewing a draft.

From the time Biden took office until late May, U.S. agencies ordered more than 400 zero-emission vehicles, according to the General Services Administration, the agency that handles car shopping for the entire federal government. That's just a fraction of the more than 645,000 vehicles the U.S. government owns or leases, according to a count last updated by GSA in 2019.

GSA is now offering agencies the option to purchase four different Tesla Inc. vehicles, though a spokeswoman didn't answer whether agencies have bought any. A \$300 million fund would be created for the federal government to work on converting its vehicle fleet to electric and zero emission under a House Democratic spending bill released last week.

The Interior and Agriculture departments haven't published a plan for a civilian climate corps, a campaign promise that the president highlighted when signing a climate change executive order in January. Biden envisions putting Americans to work managing forests and restoring wetlands. He also included the idea in his economic proposal to Congress.

The Agriculture and Interior departments didn't respond to requests for a copy of the climate corps strategy, which was due at the end of April. Both departments' budgets include some detail about the idea—and a request for funding to implement it.

Abroad

The Defense Department missed the president's May deadline to analyze the security implications of climate change—in part because officials there are waiting on the director of national intelligence's office to complete an intelligence report on the topic, according to a Pentagon spokesman. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in March that the agency is considering climate change in installation planning, war-gaming, and defense strategies.

The intelligence report was also due at the end of May. A spokeswoman for Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines wouldn't say whether it is complete. Such an intelligence report can often take officials up to 18 months to write, said Peter Clement, who worked under the director of national intelligence during the Bush and Obama presidencies.

The Defense Department extended the deadline for its security analysis to the end of July, the Pentagon spokesman said, to allow officials to incorporate intelligence from Haines's team and a United Nations climate report into their strategy. (Agence France-Presse published a leaked draft of the U.N. document June 23.)

Former President Barack Obama tasked the Defense Department with writing a similar analysis. However, the effects of climate change have since grown. Worsening droughts or natural disasters are pushing people to migrate, creating pressures at the nation's borders, said Alice Hill, who worked on climate change issues at the National Security Council and Department of Homeland Security under Obama.

The Senate also has yet to confirm a slew of the president's top political appointees at the Defense Department, including officials who manage acquisition, personnel and readiness, and research and engineering. The tight deadline means that career officials are likely being asked to develop a plan that political appointees will need to implement once they're confirmed, said John Conger, who oversaw environmental policy at the Defense Department during the Obama administration.

"There's a degree of urgency coming from the White House: 'Get this stuff done,'" Conger said. "There's a practical reality coming from the agency, saying: 'It takes longer than you think it does.' In the end, it will come out somewhere in the middle."

To contact the reporter on this story: Courtney Rozen in Washington at crozen@bgov.com

To contact the editors responsible for this story: Bernie Kohn at bkohn@bloomberglaw.com; Gregory Henderson at ghenderson@bloombergindustry.com

© 2021 The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Study: EPA underestimated methane emissions from oil and gas development

BY ZACK BUDRYK · 06/29/21 02:09 PM EDT

Just In...

Putin says US reconnaissance aircraft was involved in warning shot incident with UK

INTERNATIONAL — 6M 13S AGO

Fauci warns of 'two Americas' due to widening gap between vaccinated and unvaccinated

HEALTHCARE — 10M 19S AGO

Federal relief won't help if communities lack the capacity to spend it

OPINION — 18M 28S AGO

Democratic AAPI PAC endorses McAuliffe in Virginia governor's race

CAMPAIGN — 18M 31S AGO

Tucker Carlson doubles down on NSA spy claim after agency denial

MEDIA — 27M 39S AGO

At least 5 dead amid searing heatwave

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT — 43M 19S AGO

Joe Manchin's secret

OPINION — 48M 33S AGO

Kamala Harris's date with history

OPINION — 1H 18M AGO

[VIEW ALL](#)



© getty

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has underestimated methane emissions caused by oil and gas production by as much as 76 percent, according to research published Tuesday in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres*.

Researchers from Pennsylvania State University collected data in the mid-Atlantic, mid-South and central Midwest of the U.S. from 2017 to 2019, tracking the movement of carbon dioxide, methane and ethane within weather systems. They then studied ethane-to-methane ratios from oil and gas production basins and compared to them an EPA inventory of those emissions.

The assessment found emissions at levels between 48 percent and 76 percent higher than the EPA's estimates.

The researchers said they specifically analyzed ethane because it is only produced alongside certain methane emissions, whereas methane can be produced naturally and by landfills. Ethane also only lingers in the atmosphere for months at a time and offers a clearer picture of how recent the methane emissions occurred.

In a statement to The Hill, the EPA said its greenhouse gas emissions inventory methods are continually updated based on stakeholder feedback.

"Given the variability of practices and technologies across oil and gas systems and the occurrence of episodic events, it is possible that the EPA's estimates do not include all methane emissions from abnormal events," an agency spokesperson said.

Related News

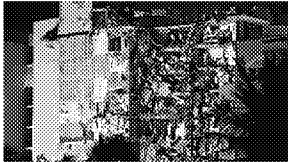
by



Meghan McCain calls
'defund the police' the...



Christie: 'No damage was
done' from Biden's...



Surfside building residents
file second...



[Pics] The Truth About His
Sickness Is Pretty...

Sponsored | Bon Voyaged

"For many equipment types and activities, the EPA's emission estimates include the full range of conditions, including 'super-emitters.' For other situations, where data are available, emissions estimates for abnormal events are calculated separately and included in the GHG Inventory," the spokesperson added. "The EPA continues to work through its stakeholder process to review new data from the EPA's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP) and research studies to assess how emissions estimates can be improved."

David Lyon, a senior scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund, told The Hill the paper was consistent with other research on underestimations of methane emissions.

"This finding confirms that bottom-up inventory approaches used by EPA greatly underestimate oil and gas methane emissions," Lyon said. "I recommend that EPA and other stakeholders use more measurement data to accurately estimate methane emissions."

OVERNIGHT ENERGY: Supreme Court rules that pipeline can seize land...

Report: Mexico's state oil company sliding on environmental standards

The study comes days after the House voted to do away with a Trump administration rule weakening restrictions on methane emissions.

In floor remarks Friday, House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) called the Trump rule "a thinly veiled attempt to block regulation of the worst oil and gas industry actors at the expense of our health, our safety and our planet."

<< Back to table of contents.

POLITICS

Biden on EVs, rail, energy: 'We are not just tinkering'

Adam Aton, E&E News reporter • Published: Wednesday, June 30, 2021



President Biden is shown talking to reporters at the White House yesterday before leaving for Wisconsin. Biden's trip was intended to build support for new infrastructure spending. Win McNamee/Getty Images

Armed with statistics, President Biden yesterday began pitching the public on his bipartisan infrastructure deal.

But he delivered his most dire data point off the cuff.

"Anybody ever believe you'd hear — turn on the news and [hear them] say it was 116 degrees in Portland, Ore.?" Biden said, before taking a tone of sarcastic exasperation.

"116 degrees — but don't worry, there's no global warming. It doesn't exist. It's a figment of our imagination."

Biden's speech in Wisconsin signaled a delicate new stage for his climate agenda. The bipartisan infrastructure deal includes billions of dollars for decarbonizing the electricity and transportation sectors. But it's almost certainly insufficient to cut emissions in half by 2030, which is the scientific benchmark for maintaining a safe climate as well as Biden's own policy target.

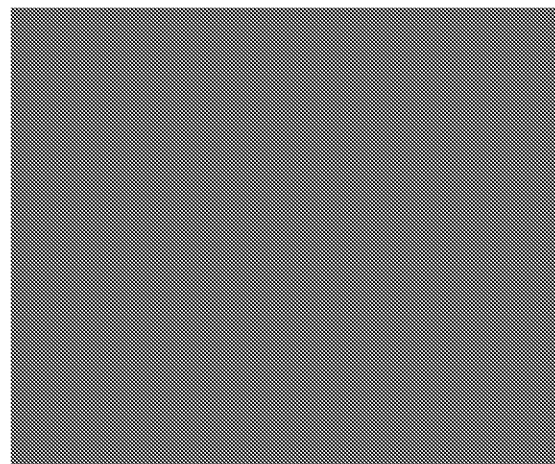
Biden is pursuing the rest of his climate agenda through a second bill. But narrow

RESIZE TEXT

SHARE

PRINT

Advertisement



Democratic majorities mean the fates of both packages are potentially tied together (*E&E Daily*, June 29).

In his speech, Biden tried to strike a balance between those political pressures. The bipartisan deal will help many people, he argued, but the climate demands more.

"Let me be clear: There's much more to do," he said. "And I'm going to continue to fight for more. I am going to keep working with Congress to pass even more of my economic agenda so we can keep building an economy from the bottom up and the middle out."

The success of a big bipartisan bill could pave the way for greater climate action, he said.

"Every time we negotiate in good faith and come together to get something big done, we break a little more of the ice that too often keeps us frozen in place and prevents us from solving the real problems people are facing," he said.

Biden pointed to the annual costs of power outages, the life span of old transmission lines and the number of school buses emitting diesel fumes as reasons to pass the bipartisan agreement.

"Power outages cost the U.S. economy up to ... \$70 billion annually. Do you hear me? Nationally, \$70 billion annually," the president said.

"And as climate change induces extreme weather events more and more frequently, we need to make investments to build a more resilient grid to carry this electricity. The majority of the nation's grid is aging. Some components are over a century old. And 70% of transmission and distribution lines are well into the second half of their life span."

The bipartisan deal includes \$15 billion for electric vehicle charging stations and electrifying transit.

Biden had originally called for \$174 billion for EVs. But he said the lower amount will still meet his goal of building 500,000 charging stations, as well as 35,000 electric school buses.

Biden said those chargers represent a communitywide opportunity.

"And when you build a charging station, it spurs even more investment and more infrastructure around it: the local convenience store, the local hamburgers place," he said, comparing it to the local economic development that followed the first gas stations.

"Entire communities grew up around [early gas stations]. Well, this is exactly what we have to do with regard to electric vehicles," he said.

Amtrak and freight rail would see an additional \$66 billion under the deal.

That's enough to reimagine entire rail corridors, Biden said, promising to "eliminate backlogs, bring world class rail service to areas outside of the Northeast. Here in Wisconsin, we will add new stops in Green Bay, Madison and Eau Claire."

"We are not just tinkering around the edges," he said.

This story also appears in Climatewire.

Twitter: @AdamAton | Email: aaton@eenews.net

ENERGYWIRE HEADLINES — Wednesday, June 30, 2021

SPOTLIGHT

- 1. ENERGY TRANSITIONS
What Supreme Court ruling means for FERC, gas, pipelines

TOP STORIES

- 2. ENERGY TRANSITIONS
Moniz-led group releases CCS, pipeline blueprint
- 3. POLITICS
Biden on EVs, rail, energy: 'We are not just tinkering'
- 4. RENEWABLE ENERGY
Ohio governor weighs bill allowing local wind, solar bans

POLITICS

- 5. ELECTRIC VEHICLES
Granholm backs 'visionary' EV startup facing pushback

ENERGY TRANSITIONS

- 6. NATURAL GAS
Study documents pipeline, environmental justice link

FEDERAL AGENCIES

- 7. SECURITY
Utility group, Army ink deal to boost grid 'resilience'

ELECTRICITY

- 8. GRID
Rolling blackouts hit parts of Northwest amid heat wave
- 9. ELECTRICITY
Iran power cuts fuel fears in Iraq as scorching summer peaks
- 10. RENEWABLE ENERGY
MGM unveils solar project it says will power 13 Vegas hotels

OIL AND GAS

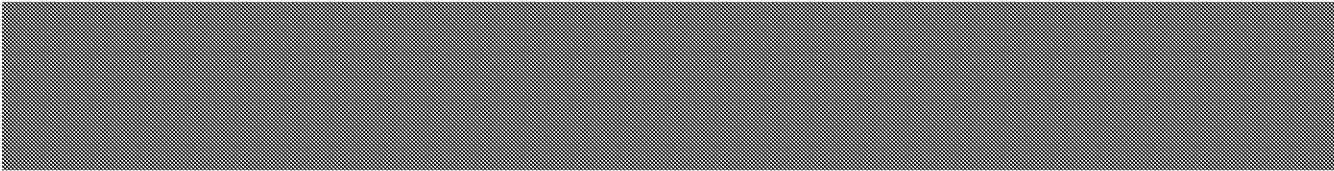
- 11. INDIA
Nation sees return to normal oil demand by year end

Advertisement





Advertisement



LATEST SELECTED HEADLINES

E&EDAILY

Wednesday, June 30, 2021 — 7:03 AM

POLITICS

Methane vote shows limits of Republican climate caucus

POLITICS

A Republican backpedals after years of climate advocacy

HOUSE

Garret Graves to lead GOP climate, energy task force

POLITICS

How the House package fits into infrastructure talks

MORE HEADLINES

CLIMATEWIRE

Wednesday, June 30, 2021 — 6:51 AM

CONGRESS

A Republican backpedals after years of climate advocacy

POLITICS

Biden on EVs, rail, energy: 'We are not just tinkering'

BUSINESS

U.S. Chamber official warned of climate danger in 1989

WHITE HOUSE

Biden will boost response to climate-fueled wildfires

MORE HEADLINES

E&ENEWS PM

Tuesday, June 29, 2021 — 4:09 PM

APPROPRIATIONS

House proposes additional funds for PFAS cleanup

PEOPLE

Trump's top mine regulator joins coal company

FISHERIES

Calif. budget clears way for ending use of drift gill nets

BIOFUELS

Ag group urges Biden to keep RFS blending requirements

MORE HEADLINES

GREENWIRE

Tuesday, June 29, 2021 — 1:24 PM

BUSINESS

Small federal agency gears up to take down Biden regs

LAW

Idaho prosecutor: Bundy believed rules 'don't apply' to him

EXTREME WEATHER

Detroit's 500-year flood shows new climate risks for Midwest

FEDERAL WORKFORCE

EPA, Interior, DOE morale improved, even amid pandemic

MORE HEADLINES



The essential news for energy & environment professionals

© Politico, LLC [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Do not sell my info](#) [Notice to California Residents](#) [Site Map](#) [Contact Us](#)



EHS Daily Advisor (https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/)

[f](https://www.facebook.com/EHSDailyAdvisor/) (https://www.facebook.com/EHSDailyAdvisor/)
 [t](https://twitter.com/intent/follow?ref=twimg) (https://twitter.com/intent/follow?ref=twimg)
 [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ehs-daily-advisor/) (https://www.linkedin.com/company/ehs-daily-advisor/)
 [yt](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7A039F02ISDailyAdv) (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7A039F02ISDailyAdv)

About Us (https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/about/)

Advertise (https://simplifymediagroup.com/?webSyncID=a3a107c6-e556-cda7-e034-802417760ece&sessionGUID=1c94c997-758c-ed00-6cd4-ae19ac475807)

Search ...



Stay Informed! Sign up for the EHS Daily Advisor Newsletter

Email Address

Join

ENFORCEMENT AND INSPECTION, REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

Carbon Capture Bills Gathering Steam in Congress

By Lisa Whitley Coleman | Jun 30, 2021

Enforcement and Inspection (https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/category/enforcement-and-inspection/), Regulatory Developments (https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/category/regs/)

Several bills creating benefits and financing for carbon capture have been introduced in Congress and are seeing movement through bipartisan support. Carbon capture, also known as carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration (CCUS), is the process of gathering carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, typically from sources such as coal-fired power plants. Once captured, the greenhouse gas is usually stored or reused so it does not enter the atmosphere, where it is harmful to the environment.

The emergence of direct air capture (DAC) technology, which allows CO₂ to be captured directly from the atmosphere, enhances the outlook of CCUS. "Scientists say that these emerging [CCUS] technologies, neither of which is economically available at scale, are going to be needed in



(https://news.blr.com/app/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/shutterstock_314808188.jpg)

potentially large amounts in order for the U.S. to go from the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, to a nation that absorbs more carbon than it releases," says Axios (https://www.axios.com/climate-change-bipartisan-bills-carbon-capture-storage-b959b187-3929-43c0-a3d6-8530012f18e4.html).

Bills with Bipartisan Support

Carbon Capture Improvement Act

Senators Michael Bennet (D.-Colo.) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) introduced the Carbon Capture Improvement Act (https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/c/e/ce4a82de-7388-45ad-8928-9f8e63e39f93/58CE0A9BAC788E648FD65F3E140F1460.gai21584.pdf) on May 26, 2021. The bill aims to help industry finance CCUS and DAC technology.

"The bill would permit businesses to use private activity bonds, which local and state governments currently have access to, in order to finance a carbon capture project," according to Axios.

Private activity bonds (PABs) are tax-exempt, can be paid back over longer periods of time, and are currently used to finance projects such as docks, airports, and sewage facilities.

"Under this bill, if more than 65 percent of carbon dioxide emissions from a given facility are captured and injected underground, then 100 percent of the eligible equipment can be financed with PABs," notes Portman's website (https://www.portman.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/portman-bennet-introduce-bill-help-finance-carbon-capture-projects-reduce). "If less than 65 percent is captured and sequestered, then tax-exempt financing is permitted on a pro-rated basis. PABs have been used for decades to finance pollution control equipment at U.S. power and industrial facilities; capturing carbon dioxide is a logical next step. The bill would also allow facilities to utilize the existing 45Q tax credit for carbon sequestration for industrial emissions."

"This bill is a win-win for jobs and the environment, and I'm proud to continue my work on this issue with Senator Bennet," says Portman in a press release. "Carbon capture and [DAC] are common-sense technologies that will allow states like Ohio to continue to utilize our natural resources while protecting our environment at the same time. This bipartisan measure is supported by business groups, energy groups, and environmental groups alike, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it."

CATCH Act

Representatives Tim Ryan (D-OH), Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), Cheri Bustos (D-IL), Tim Walberg (R-MI), Marc Veasey (D-TX), David McKinley (R-WV), Susan Wild (D-PA), and Kelly Armstrong (R-ND) introduced the Coordinated Action to Capture Harmful (CATCH) Emissions Act (<https://timryanforms.house.gov/components/redirect/r.aspx?ID=483728-71765896>) on May 25, 2021. This act will boost 45Q tax credits for power plants and other industrial facilities to implement CCUS technology.

"The CATCH Act establishes the following credit levels:

- an \$85 per metric ton credit level for industrial and power generation facilities seeking to securely store captured CO₂ in saline geologic formations; and
- \$60 per metric ton for storage in oil and gas fields and for the beneficial utilization of captured carbon to manufacture low and zero-carbon fuels, chemicals, building products, advanced materials and other products of economic value.

Recent analysis (<https://timryanforms.house.gov/components/redirect/r.aspx?ID=483724-71765896>) by the Rhodium Group underscores the potentially transformative impact of key provisions in the CATCH Act. Together with direct pay and a ten-year extension of 45Q, the increased credit values provided for in this bill would result in an estimated 212-252 million metric tons of carbon capture capacity by 2035 in the U.S. industrial sector alone. Additionally, higher 45Q values lead to increases in capture capacity of up to 61 percent at hydrogen plants, 79 percent at refineries, and 386 percent at cement facilities. Without these provisions, the Rhodium Group finds no carbon capture deployment at domestic iron and steel plants. The projected \$12-15 billion in total investment [through] 2035 translates into an estimated 60,700-78,600 additional job-years over the time period," according to Ryan's website (<https://timryan.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-ryan-leads-bipartisan-coalition-house-members-introducing-catch-act-boost>).

Scale Act

Senators Chris Coons (D-De.) and Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.), as well as Veasey and McKinley, introduced the Storing CO₂ And Lowering Emissions (SCALE) Act (<https://www.coons.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/One%20Pager%20-%20SCALE%20Act%20-%20117.pdf>) on March 17, 2021. The bill will assist in the development of CCUS infrastructure to reduce CO₂ emissions.

"The SCALE Act is the first comprehensive CO₂ infrastructure package to be introduced in Congress," according to Coons's website (<https://www.coons.senate.gov/news/press-releases/bipartisan-group-introduces-nations-first-comprehensive-co2-infrastructure-bill>). "The bill would support the buildout of infrastructure to transport CO₂ from the sites of capture to locations where it can be either utilized in manufacturing or sequestered safely and securely underground.

"The legislation would also provide critical regional economic opportunities and create thousands of jobs. An analysis released (<https://www.catf.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-SCALE-Act-Jobs-Report.pdf>) as part of the Decarb America Project shows that the provisions in the SCALE Act could create approximately 13,000 direct and indirect jobs per year through the 5-year authorization. This figure does not include the additional thousands of jobs created by retrofitting energy-intensive facilities such as cement and steel plants or by building [DAC] plants."

Specifically, the bill would:

- Establish the CO₂ Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (CIFIA) program to provide low-interest loans and grants for new infrastructure projects.
- Build upon the existing Department of Energy CarbonSAFE program to provide cost sharing for deployment of commercial-scale saline geologic CO₂ storage projects.
- Authorize increased EPA funding to permit Class VI CO₂ storage wells in saline geologic formations, and provide grants for states to establish their own Class VI permitting programs.
- Provide grants to state and local governments for procuring CO₂ utilization products, and support state and local programs that create demand for items created from captured carbon.

This bill (S.799) has been referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

USE IT Act

Senators John Barrasso (R-WY) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) reintroduced the Utilizing Significant Emissions with Innovative Technologies (USE IT) Act (https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?fa=files.serve&File_id=BD09FFAC-E91C-40DE-8B7A-AD491C8D11A9) in February 2021. The bill was also sponsored by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tom Carper (D-DE), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Tina Smith (D-MN), Joe Manchin (D-WV), and Mike Enzi (R-WY).

This act supports DAC research and carbon utilization by:

- Amending the Clean Air Act (CAA) to direct the EPA to support carbon utilization and DAC research;
- Clarifying that CCUS projects and CO₂ pipelines are eligible for the permitting review process established by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act;
- Directing the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to create guidance for project developers and operators of CCUS facilities and CO₂ pipelines;
- Establishing task forces to hear input from affected stakeholders for updating and improving guidance over time; *and*
- Building on the FUTURE Act and bipartisan legislation—now signed into law and introduced by Barrasso, Whitehouse, and Capito—to extend and expand the 45Q tax credit to provide certainty to utilities and other industrial sources and incentivize the build-out of CCUS projects.

The USE IT Act has passed into law. Senators are pushing the CEQ for implementation of the act, according to Capito's website (<https://www.capito.senate.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-capito-colleagues-press-ceq-for-status-update-on-use-it-act-implementation>).

Biden's American Jobs Plan

President Joseph Biden Jr.'s American Jobs Plan (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/>) covers 27 pages, with 1 important paragraph containing "the most significant investment proposal to commercialize carbon management technologies ever put forward by a single government," according to an article (<https://www.catf.us/2021/04/the-american-jobs-plan-whats-in-it-for-carbon-capture/>) by Lee Beck published by the Clean Air Task Force (CATF).

"The Plan could grow US carbon management capacity by more than 13-fold by 2035 while safeguarding and creating tens of thousands American jobs and establishing the US as a global leader in innovation and decarbonization," the article says. "The American Jobs Plan is also a significant part of the new [U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution (<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/United%20States%20of%20America%20First/United%20States%20NDC%20April%2021%202021%20Final>)] which mentions carbon capture as part of the decarbonization pathways for industry and electricity."

CCUS and DAC Technologies

The development of CCUS and DAC technologies is widely supported by many companies and unions, including GE Gas Power, Air Liquid, ACL-CIO, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America Inc., National Farmers Union, Occidental, Shell, and United Steelworkers.

Some types of CCUS are already in use, such as chemical absorption from the production of ammonia and processing natural gas and the reuse of CO₂ in fertilizer production.

"The technical challenge has been scaling-up and adapting petrochemical industry technology to larger gas volumes, lower pressures, and lower CO₂ concentrations," according to *Power* magazine (<https://www.powermag.com/ccus-big-opportunity-and-hard-questions/>). "This challenge appears to have been met by the Petra Nova project in Texas (<https://www.powermag.com/capturing-carbon-and-seizing-innovation-petra-nova-is-powers-plant-of-the-year/>), a \$1 billion demonstration project funded with federal and private investment. Petra Nova used amine-washing of the flue gas to remove 90% or more of the CO₂ from a 240 MW slipstream at NRG's coal-fired W.A. Parish Unit 8."

Unfortunately, a decline in oil production and prices ultimately made the project a financial failure, and it was "mothballed," notes *Power*.

Technologies on the horizon for DAC include "everything from synthetic trees to enhancing the ability of natural systems to soak up carbon," says Bennet, who adds that the future is bright for these technologies. Bennet adds these technologies must be supported to address climate change concerns and the future of workers in the fossil fuel sector.

The high costs of further developing these technologies make it imperative that bills to finance infrastructure and research and development activities receive further bipartisan support so they are passed into law.

Share This Article: **PRINT** ([HTTPS://EHSAILYADVISOR.BLR.COM/2021/06/CARBON-CAPTURE-BILLS-GATHERING-STEAM-IN-CONGRESS/](https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/2021/06/carbon-capture-bills-gathering-steam-in-congress/))

Tags: carbon capture and storage (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/carbon-capture-and-storage/>), CCUS (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/ccus/>), greenhouse gas (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/greenhouse-gas/>), Greenhouse Gas Emissions (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/greenhouse-gas-emissions/>), Greenhouse Gases (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/greenhouse-gases/>), industrial (<https://ehsdailyadvisor.blr.com/tag/industrial/>)

What do you think?

0 Responses

I agree

I disagree

Great read

Surprising

Disappointing

Interesting

EHS Daily Advisor Comment Policy

This is a forum for EHS professionals, managers, and executives. All comments are moderated before posting. Please read our Comment Policy before commenting.



0 Comments **EHS Daily Advisor** **Disqus' Privacy Policy**

Login ▾

Recommend **Twitter** **Share**

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

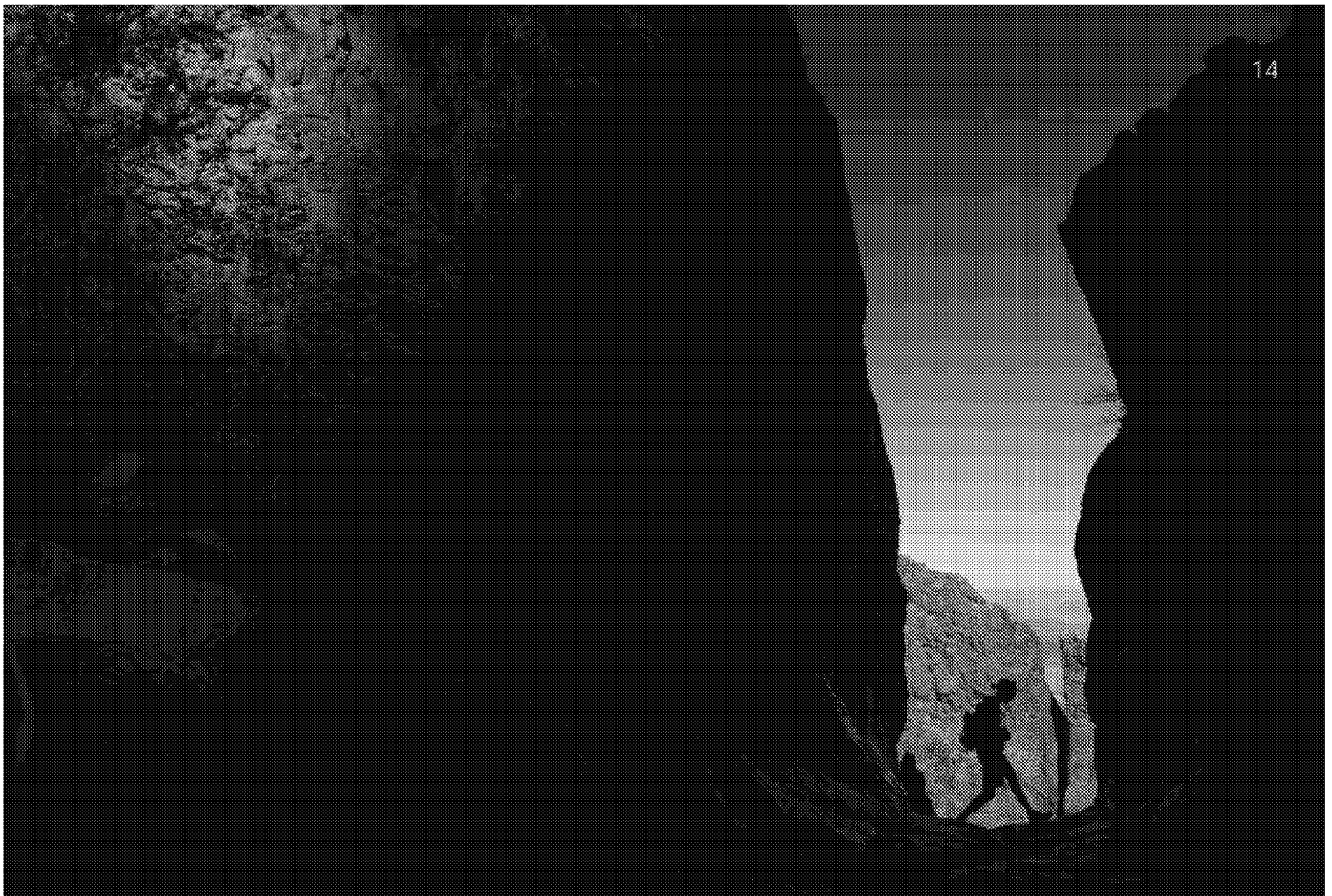
Subscribe **Add Disqus to your site** **Add Disqus** **Do Not Sell My Data**

Hazy view in Big Bend? Texas officials don't want any new rules to fix it.



Emily Foxhall, Staff writer

Updated: June 30, 2021 6:18 a.m.



1 of 14



A hiker checks out the view from The Window in Big Bend National Park Sunday, April 9, 2017. (Michael Ciaglo / Houston Chronicle)

Michael Ciaglo, Staff / Houston Chronicle

State environmental regulators are proposing to do nothing new to meet federal rules that require them to manage how hazy it is at certain national parks and wilderness areas, arguing that they're already on track to meet visibility goals.

But advocates and researchers criticized how the state reached that conclusion and argue regulators are missing a critical chance to reduce pollution that not only contributes to hazy skies but also can be harmful to human health.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality commissioners are expected to vote Wednesday morning on the plan, which puts in place no new emissions controls. Staffers say that reducing pollution at sites they believe may contribute to haze — such as coal-fired power plants — is unreasonably expensive, ineffective and unnecessary.

The federal regional haze rules are meant to restore "natural visibility" at specified areas by 2064. But TCEQ staff note that other policies already regulate pollution, and that human-generated haze in all but one of the nearby federally protected places is improving.

"We think that this plan will continue to show improvement at those [protected] areas within Texas and then those areas outside of Texas that are impacted," said Walker Williamson, senior project manager for the agency's air quality division.

Not everyone agrees with their analysis.

To figure out if more should be done, TCEQ staff studied the effects of human-caused pollution on the places they believe Texas facilities could be affecting, including Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains national parks, plus areas in New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Researchers looked at facility site emissions, distances to protected areas, air monitoring at those places and patterns of how the air moves pollutants. They identified 18 sites where emissions reductions could help make skies more clear.

But to get emissions down at those facilities could cost \$200 million a year, they said, for a benefit so small that people wouldn't notice the difference.

The National Parks Conservation Association believes TCEQ missed dozens of other sites in Texas that potentially affect views — and visitor experience — in federally protected areas. Among those they believe were wrongly left off? NRG's coal-fired power plant in Fort Bend County.

Getting this right especially matters to advocates because the pollutants that cause haze (sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which combine with other things in the air to form fine particulate matter) also harm human health.

Coal-fired power plants, as well as carbon black and calcining facilities, are among places known to release those pollutants; fine particulate matter can affect heart and lung function.

NRG did not provide a response Tuesday.

"This is really a chance for TCEQ and the state of Texas to take care of Texas and Texans by clearing the air over our national park sites but ultimately also our communities," said Cary Dupuy, regional director for the National Parks Conservation Association, who oversees Texas.

For Steve Brown, a resident in Sienna who works on funding clean energy projects, it was a missed opportunity to get that WA Parish Plant in Fort Bend cleaned up — or shut down. He sees its high-reaching stacks when he drives home on the toll road.

That plant, Brown argued, "does not contribute to a healthy society."

TCEQ staff pointed to other rules that are expressly designed to protect human health. But even while Texas meets the standard for fine particulate matter, researcher Dan Cohan believes the state should and could do more to improve air quality.

"We would better protect health if we could bring our PM levels even lower, like we would with this regional haze rule," said Cohan, an atmospheric scientist at Rice University.

The proposal is the second iteration of what's known as the "regional haze state implementation plan." The first plan, which was submitted in 2009, remains tied up in legal and policy wrangling with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA will get 18 months to review this second plan, if approved, which addresses a planning period through 2028. If the EPA rejects it, Texas has two years to submit a revised plan, spokesperson Jennah Durant wrote.

Otherwise, the EPA would hand them a federal one to follow.

Opinion: Hundreds of lives at stake in TCEQ decision today on haze

Daniel Cohan

Updated: June 30, 2021 3 a.m.



Piles of coal are shown at NRG Energy's W.A. Parish Electric Generating Station Wednesday, March 16, 2011, in Thompsons, Texas.

AP

Texas power plants emit more haze-forming pollution than those in any other state. The particles that we see as haze also damage our lungs and hearts.

The Clean Air Act requires each state to issue a plan for combating that haze over the next decade. Commissioners of the state's environmental agency, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, or TCEQ, will vote on its haze plan today. But the agency's executive

director has provided them just one option — do nothing. Texans and the EPA should insist that TCEQ do far more.

Most Texans are unaware of this looming decision. Perhaps even the commissioners are — it's buried as item 35 on their monthly agenda. Yet doing nothing would squander a once-in-a-decade opportunity to slash haze and the deadly particles that form it.

As an atmospheric scientist, I know a thing or two about haze. My research group at Rice University has modeled how emissions from Texas coal plants harm health and form haze. That haze extends hundreds of miles downwind, obscuring the views in national parks such as Big Bend and the Guadalupe Mountains in Texas and even scenic areas in neighboring states.

Before moving back to Texas in 2006, I helped Georgia partner with nearby states to develop plans for slashing haze levels. Those states required old power plants to install scrubbers to remove their sulfur emissions, as all new plants had been required to do for decades. That helped make the air across the southern Appalachians clearer than it had been in over a century. The Great Smoky Mountains aren't so smoky anymore.

From the Editorial Board



Editorial: Finally, Supreme Court calls foul on NCAA...

By The Editorial Board



Editorial: Trump-era rule lets developer build houses on...

By The Editorial Board



Thumbs: Border blues Buc-ees' betrayal

By The Editorial Board

Texas chose a different path. It issued a haze plan so weak that EPA rejected it. After years failing to convince the state to strengthen its plan, EPA eventually issued its own plan for Texas in 2016. Its plan would have required the same sorts of pollution controls that other states had been requiring for years. But the Trump administration repealed the plan before any scrubbers were installed.

This is the year for states to issue their plans for the next decade. No state has more pollution to control than Texas, having shirked its responsibility so far.

What can be done? Texans can ask TCEQ commissioners to reject the do-nothing plan and instruct their staff to develop a rigorous one. I'll be doing so at Wednesday's meeting.

Dozens of groups and hundreds of Texans, including myself, already filed comments opposing the draft plan. Agency staff rejected all our comments, despite acknowledging that their own analysis identified many cost-effective measures. Their rationale, that the human eye might not perceive the resulting reductions in haze, is as dubious as saying we shouldn't control other pollutants if we can't feel how much warming and health damage they're causing.

If the commissioners rubber-stamp the do-nothing plan, it will be up to EPA to reject it. Normally, EPA can take 18 months to evaluate each state's plan. But this is no normal plan. It shouldn't take 18 months to determine that doing nothing is unacceptable.

SHARE YOUR OPINION

Here's how to submit letters and op-eds to the Chronicle

The longer that EPA delays, the longer we'll be stuck with needlessly high levels of air pollution and haze. Leaving Texas coal plant pollution unscrubbed contributes to hundreds of deaths each year, research published by my group has shown. That includes over 170 deaths per year from NRG's W.A. Parish plant near Sugar Land, which has avoided scrubbers for over four decades despite contributing to haze as far away as Oklahoma.

Perhaps some aging coal plants would close or switch to natural gas to avoid investing in scrubbers. So be it. Several of them failed in the February freeze and in earlier freezes, hurricanes and droughts. If they won't invest in weatherization or pollution controls, what justification do they have to keep stumbling along? Research soon to be published by my group will show that most of the output from coal plants can be replaced by a mere subset of the wind and solar farms already proposed in the ERCOT queue.

Not everything has to be bigger in Texas. With a rigorous haze plan, Texas can relinquish its status as the nation's biggest sulfur polluter and help Texans enjoy clearer and healthier air in the decade ahead.

Cohan is an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Rice University.

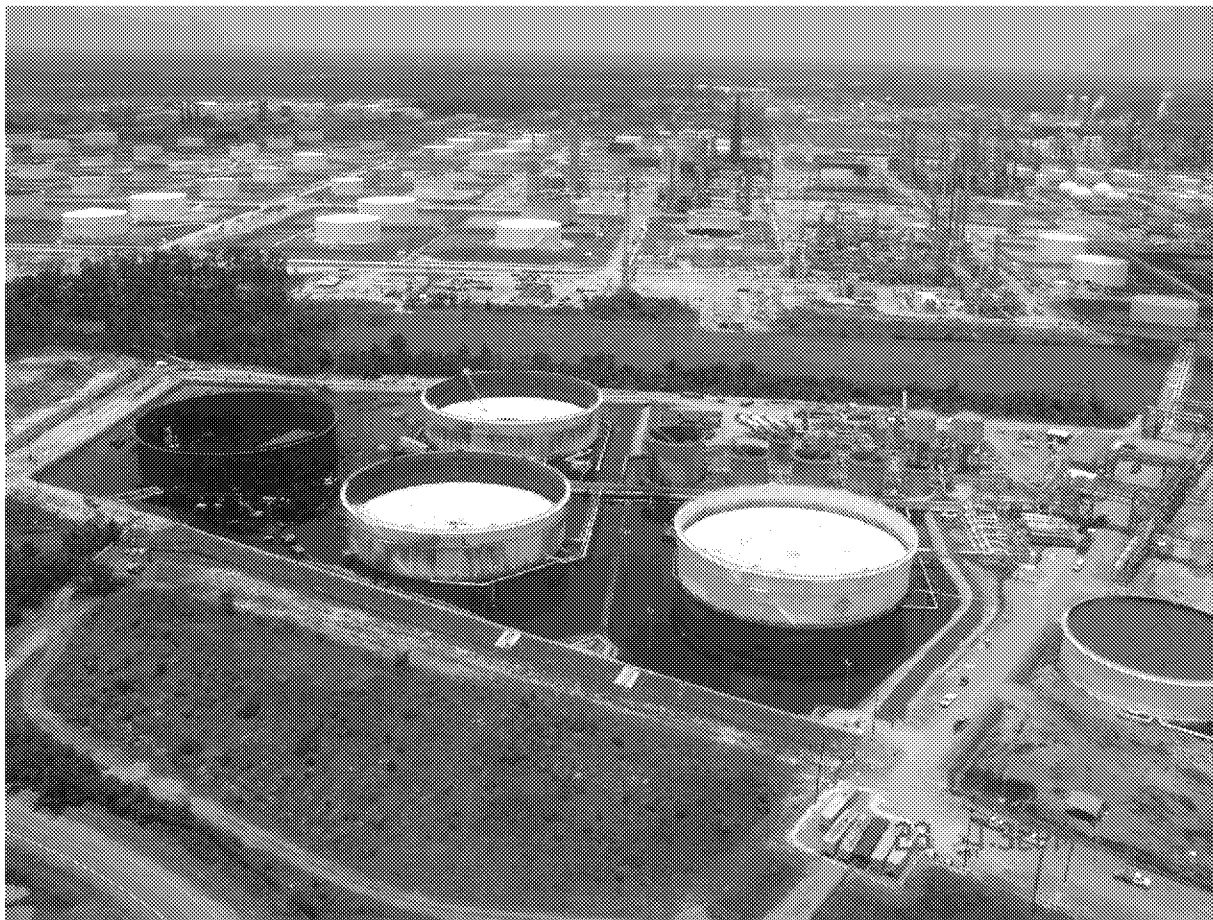
https://www.nola.com/news/courts/article_6db04752-d8f5-11eb-ac0c-77f75830d884.html

CITGO agrees to \$19.7 million settlement to mitigate 2006 oil spill in Calcasieu River

Most of money will be used to restore natural resources in Calcasieu estuary

BY MARK SCHLEIFSTEIN | STAFF WRITER

JUN 29, 2021 - 11:16 AM



Storage tanks surrounded by oil within an earthen berm that suffered multiple failures, allowing slop oil to enter the Indian Marais canal and then the Calcasieu River and estuary. The photo was taken on July 1, 2006, 12 days after the spill. (Photo by Jim Jeansonne, NOAA)

NOAA

×

Mark
Schleifstein

CITGO Petroleum Corp. has agreed to pay \$19.7 million to restore natural resources damaged during a 2006 spill of more than 2 million gallons of waste oil and millions of gallons of wastewater into the Calcasieu River estuary from its Westlake refinery, in a consent decree entered into with the U.S. Justice Department and federal and Louisiana state trustees and filed in federal court in Lake Charles.

Taken together with earlier settlements, the deal means the company will have paid nearly \$115 million in fines over the damage the spill caused.

Plans call for using \$19.2 million of the new settlement in Calcasieu Parish to restore parts of the 150-mile stretch of the estuary damaged by the spill, said Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator Sam Jones. Jones said the state Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority will be the lead state agency in determining how the money will be used.

The remaining settlement money will be used to reimburse federal and state agencies for unpaid damage assessment costs.



This aerial photo shows oil entering the Calcasieu River from the Indian Marais canal on June 25, 2006. (Photo by Joe Jeansonne, NOAA)

NOAA

A draft damage assessment and restoration plan, required by the federal Oil Pollution Act, is being developed by state and federal trustees representing the oil spill coordinator's office, CPRA, the Louisiana Departments of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources, and

Wildlife & Fisheries, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. No date has been set for its completion.

The settlement is the latest multi-million dollar payment made by the company for environmental violations involving the 2006 spill and other spills or federal or state environmental law violations at the Lake Charles area plant.

“At least 54,000 barrels (2,268,000 gallons) of waste (or ‘slop’) oil and untold millions of gallons of oily wastewater flowed into the waterways during the incident,” said the U.S. Justice Department complaint against the company, which was filed June 17 along with the consent decree in U.S. District Court in Lake Charles.



Aerial view of oil sheen in bayous and marshes next to the Gray Plantation golf course in Lake Charles on June 25, 2006, six days after the CITGO slop oil spill. (Photo by Joe Jeansonne, NOAA)

NOAA

The wastes had been held in two 10-million-gallon storage tanks that were supposed to be used to store water from storm surges. But the complaint said the company improperly used the tanks to accumulate oil, sludge and oily wastewater for years.

The wastes leaked out of the two tanks on June 18 and June 19, 2006, during a four-day rainfall event. The National Weather Service reported

that more than 8 inches fell between June 17 and June 20 at the Port of Lake Charles, but reported that some locations in Calcasieu Parish recorded 8 inches of rainfall on June 19 alone.

A containment berm around the storage tank area failed “in multiple places,” and the oil flowed into the Indian Marais waterway and then into the Calcasieu River and its complex estuary. During the next few weeks, NOAA and state officials recorded the effects of the spill along the estuary's shorelines, and in the estuary and waterways themselves, including adjacent lakes. In all, officials identified 150 miles of contaminated shoreline, including marshes, beaches and residential and industrial areas.



Dead fish in Turner's Bay, at the north end of Calcasieu Lake, on June 27, 2006. (Photo by Troy Baker, NOAA)
NOAA

The wastes were determined to have caused
killed fish, birds and at least one dolphin.

Under the Oil Pollution Act, a company
responsible for a spill must either restore
damaged wildlife and fisheries or compensate
the public for their loss.



Dead dolphin on plastic sheeting after removal from airboat. The dolphin had been iced after being picked up by the airboat and then re-iced, while awaiting arrival of a Marine Mammal Stranding Network team. The dolphin's death was part of the documentation of the effects of the CITGO slop oil spill. (Photo by Jim Jeanson)

NOAA

The spill also disrupted navigation along the Calcasieu Ship Channel and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, forcing the closure of the channel for 10 days, and requiring the removal of oil from the sides of many ships and boats. Recreational uses of the river and estuary also were disrupted, with numerous boat launches shut down.

In a 2014 decision over civil and criminal charges against the company for violation of the Clean Water Act, a federal judge found that CITGO acted with gross negligence and realized economic benefits of \$91.7 million in misusing the storage tanks.

In his decision, then-U.S. District Judge Richard Haik found that CITGO “does not appear to have recognized the importance of compliance, pollution control, environmental responsibility, and the overall duty imposed on businesses to operate safely.” The court found that CITGO’s oil spill was “massive, excessive, and a tragedy” and that CITGO “failed to inform the Coast Guard of the true nature of the incident.”



Aerial photo of CITGO spill oil surrounding a tanker in the Calcasieu River. (NOAA)

NOAA

He fined the company \$81 million after taking into account the \$65 million spent by the company to clean up the spill, and also required it to pay a state penalty of \$3 million for the discharge and other violations of the company's discharge permits.

In a separate criminal plea agreement, CITGO also paid a separate \$13 million criminal fine.

"CITGO is pleased to reach this voluntary settlement with various federal and state agencies, providing \$19.16 Million to fund environmental restoration planning and projects, as a result of a spill caused by the 2006 heavy rain event at our Lake Charles, La. refinery," the company said in a statement.

The statement said that protecting resources is a "core value for the company," and noted various "significant improvements" made since the spill to avoid a recurrence.

CITGO Refinery, Calcasieu River, LA

Overflight Map 2 of 3
prepared by NOAA

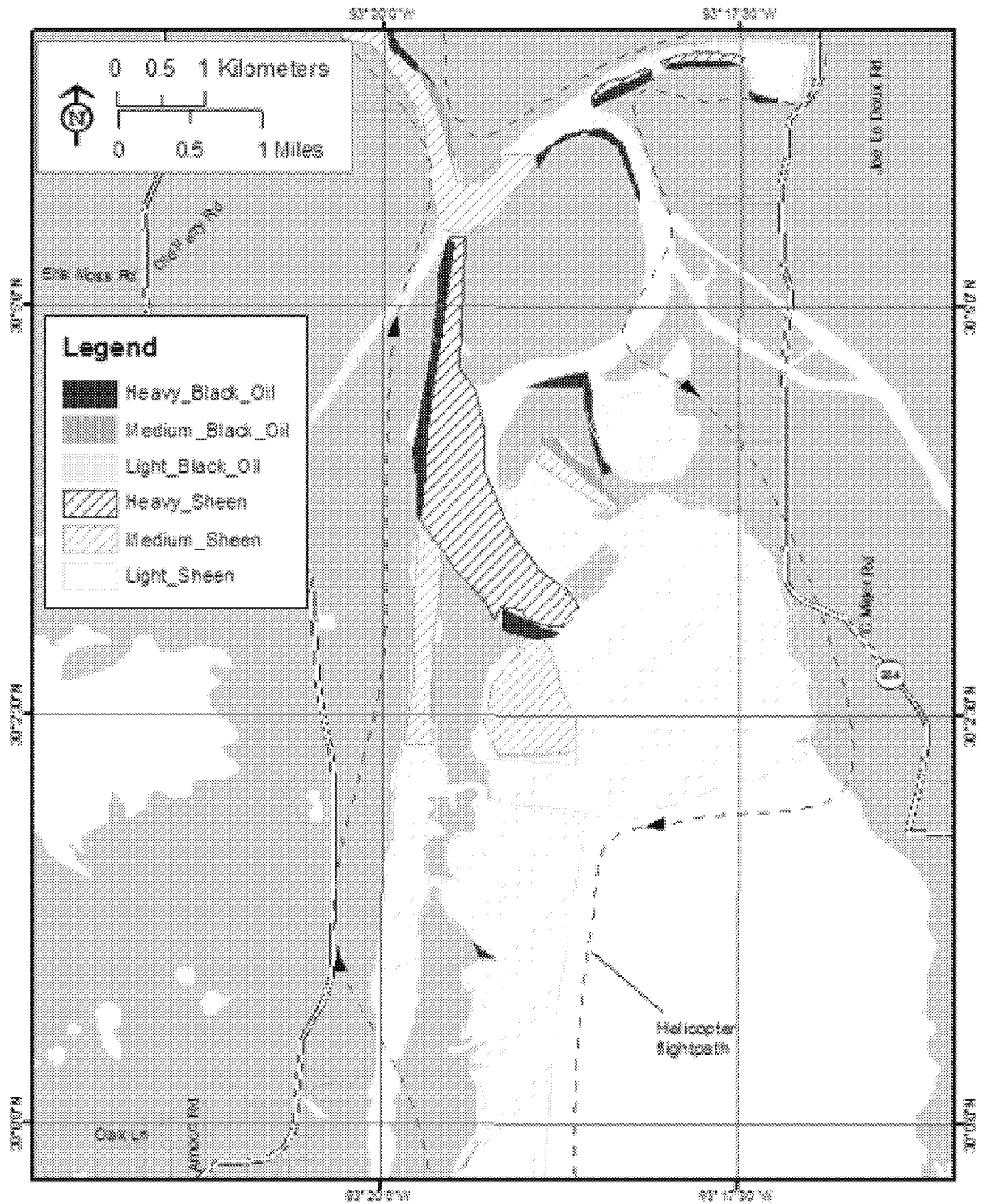
Date/Time: 27 June 2006 1000-1455

Platform: Helicopter

Observers: Jeanpierre, Baker (NOAA)

USE ONLY AS A GENERAL REFERENCE

Graphic does not represent precise amounts or locations of oil



This map outlines the oil viewed by air on part of the Calcasieu River estuary on June 27, 2006, by NOAA observers as part of their investigation of the CITGO slop oil spill.

NOAA

CITGO's environmental misdeeds in Lake Charles actually predate the 2006 spill.

Based on federal and state environmental investigations that began in 1998, federal and state officials entered an agreement in 2018 for CITGO, Occidental Chemical Corp, OxyUSA Inc. and PPG Industries Inc. to jointly pay \$11 million for improperly discharging hazardous wastes into the Calcasieu Basin for decades, with nearly \$8 million dedicated to natural resource restoration.

And in April, CITGO was one of nine Lake Charles-area chemical companies and oil refineries that agreed to pay a total of \$5.5 million to compensate EPA for its investigation and enforcement costs involving that hazardous waste case.

CITGO also is in the midst of settlement negotiations with the state Department of Environmental Quality over charges levied by the state agency in December 2018 that it failed to properly report emissions of hazardous chemical releases more than 70 times dating back to early 2016. No total fine amount has been proposed by the state in that case.

CITGO'S SCOT Johnson (NOAA) Photo: 08/06/2006 09:10:23 Lat: 30° 07' 19.77" Long: -90° 19' 2.58"



Oil from the CITGO spill covered the lower three feet of marsh grasses along Calcasieu estuary shorelines.
(Photo by Jim Jeanson, NOAA)

NOAA

CITGO also reported releases of several hazardous chemicals from its refinery during both Hurricanes Laura and Delta in 2020, but filed the report under a state provision that provides companies immunity for "acts of God" -- in this case, the hurricanes -- resulted in an uncontrollable release.

The consent decree announced June 17 must still be approved by a federal judge after completion of a 30-day public comment period that ends on July 17. Comments can be emailed to pubcomment-ees.enrd@usdoj.gov, or can be sent by mail to Acting Assistant Attorney General; U.S. DOJ-ENRD; P.O. Box 7611; Washington, D.C. 20044-7611.

Recommended for You

Read This Before You Renew Amazon Prime Again

Sponsored | Capital One Shopping

[Pics] Laura Ingraham, 57, Never Got Married And Now We Know Why

Sponsored | Popular Everything

[Read more](#)

[Photos] See Inside Bezos' \$200M New Home

Sponsored | Your Money Magic

[Pics] We Dare You Not To Laugh At These Vacation Pictures

Sponsored | Gloriosa

This Japanese Toilet Might Be Coming To Your City Next.

Sponsored | Investing.com

[Gallery] Donald Trump Photos That Are Barely Seen

Sponsored | ItsTheVibe

<< [Back to Climatewire index page.](#)

LOUISIANA

NASA looks at state delta system, eyes global forecasts

Published: Wednesday, June 30, 2021

Erosion, sinking land and sea-level rise from climate change have killed the Louisiana woods where a 41-year-old Native American chief played as a child. Not far away in the Mississippi River delta system, middle-school students can stand on islands that emerged the year they were born.

NASA is using high-tech airborne systems along with boats and mud-slogging work on islands for a \$15 million, five-year study of these adjacent areas of Louisiana. One is hitched to a river and growing; the other is disconnected and dying.

Scientists from NASA and a half-dozen universities from Boston to California aim to create computer models that can be used with satellite data to let countries around the world learn which parts of their dwindling deltas can be shored up and which are past hope.

"If you have to choose between saving an area and losing another instead of losing everything, you want to know where to put your resources to work to save the livelihood of all the people who live there," said lead scientist Marc Simard of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

While oceans rise because of climate change, the world's river deltas — home to seafood nurseries and more than 300 million people — are sinking and shrinking.

To figure out where to shore up dying deltas, NASA is studying water flowing in and out of Louisiana's Atchafalaya and Terrebonne basins; sediment carried by it; and plants that can slow the flow, trap sediment and pull carbon from the air.

Louisiana holds 40% of the nation's wetlands, but they're disappearing fast — about 2,000 square miles of the state have been lost since the 1930s. That's about 80% of the nation's wetland losses, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Using two kinds of radar and a spectrometer that measures more colors than the human eye can distinguish, high-altitude NASA airplanes have been collecting information such as water height, slope, sediment, and the types and density of plants. Some measurements are as precise as a couple of centimeters.

On boats and islands, scientists and students from across the country take samples and measure everything from currents to diameters of trees. Their findings will be used to calibrate the airborne instruments.

"I've been working here 15 years, and one of the toughest parts about working in a delta is you can only touch one little piece of it at any one time and understand one little piece of it at one time," said Robert Twilley, a professor of oceanography and coastal sciences at

Louisiana State University. "Now we have the capability of working with NASA to understand the entire delta."

The Mississippi River drains 41% of the continental United States, collecting 150 million tons of sediment per year. But, largely because of flood-prevention levees, most sediment shoots into the Gulf of Mexico rather than settling in wetlands.

"Deltas are the babies of the geological timescale. They are very young and fragile, in a delicate balance of sinking and growing," NASA states on the Delta-X project website.

In geological time, young means thousands of years. On that scale, Louisiana's Wax Lake Delta is taking its first breaths. It dates to 1942, when the Army Corps of Engineers dug an outlet from the lake to reduce flood threats to Morgan City, about 20 miles away. Sediment from the Atchafalaya River filled the lake, then began creating islands in the Gulf.

The new islands are thick with black willows and, in spring, thigh-high butterweed topped with small yellow flowers.

Older wetlands in areas surveyed by Delta-X aircraft are more diverse, their soil rich with humus from generations of plants. Along nearby Hog Bayou, blue buntings and scarlet tanagers dart through magnolia branches and skinks skitter up trees. In swamps, ospreys nest atop bald cypresses and alligators float in the water below.

In addition to working at LSU, Twilley has spent about nine years as executive director of Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, which uses the Wax Lake Delta as a classroom for middle- and high-school students.

"We take kids and make them stand on land that was formed the year they were born," Twilley said.

In contrast, the adjacent Terrebonne Basin is shrinking so rapidly that the government is paying to move the Isle de Jean Charles band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians from a vanishing island to higher ground.

That band isn't the only Native American group losing ground.

"The wooded areas we used to run through as children — they're dead," said Chief Shirell Parfait-Dardar of the Grand Caillou/Dulac Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians, based less than 50 miles from the Wax Lake Delta.

"Ghost forests" are common in degrading deltas where salt water intrudes as land sinks and erodes, LSU's Twilley said.

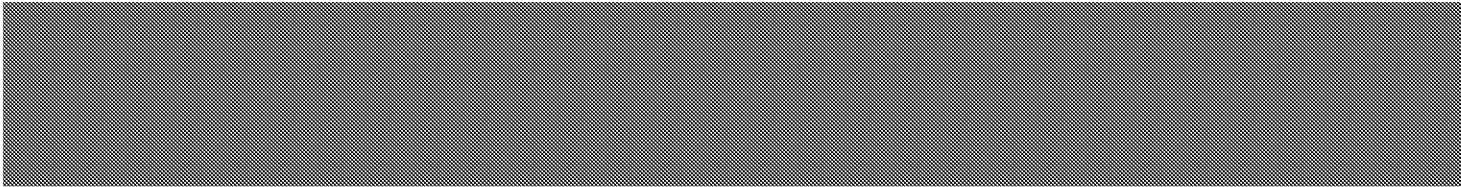
Louisiana is considering two projects that would divert Atchafalaya River sediment to build land in the Terrebonne Basin, but a decision is more than a year away, according to the state Coastal Restoration and Restoration Authority.

"All of the tools they're bringing to bear is really impressive," said Indiana University sedimentary geologist Douglas Edmonds, who is not part of the project but has worked with many of the researchers.

"The project itself is putting a finger on a really essential question for a lot of deltas around the world — how this deltaic land is formed and what processes take it away," he said. —

Janet McConnaughey, Associated Press

Advertisement



[E&E Home](#) | [About](#) | [Get Access](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Staff Directory](#) | [Reports](#) | [RSS](#)

E&E NEWS

ENERGY WIRE

CLIMATE WIRE

E&E DAILY

GREEN WIRE

E&E NEWS PM

The essential news for energy & environment professionals

© Politico, LLC [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Do not sell my info](#) [Notice to California Residents](#) [Site Map](#) [Contact Us](#)

Setting the rules for Louisiana solar projects: Farmers, lobbyists discuss differences in hearings

BY SAM KARLIN | STAFF WRITER JUN 29, 2021 - 5:09 PM



The West Baton Rouge Solar Farm being tied into Entergy has over 100,000 individual solar panels and is off Rosedale Road.

STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN BALLANCE

Sam Karlin

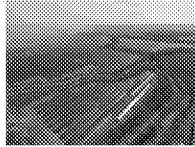
Dozens of farmers, lobbyists and representatives for the solar industry started hashing out their differences Tuesday over rules for solar projects that have started popping up across the state, which have sparked pushback from farmers worried they can't compete with the companies for land.

Officials with the state Department of Natural Resources held two hearings Tuesday to begin gathering input from the various players. The meetings kicked off a months-long rulemaking process for utility-scale solar projects.

Farmers complained the projects are taking land away from agriculture interests, and that would-be builders of such projects are outbidding them for land. Representatives of landowners asked regulators not to limit their ability to lease their land to who they want. And people representing the solar industry warned the state could lose out on big investments in renewable energy if the state singles out solar energy for heavy-handed regulation.

The backdrop for the hearings was a legislative session that featured several lawmakers sympathetic to agriculture interests pushing proposals that took aim at solar projects. Such

projects are gaining momentum in Louisiana, even though they represent a tiny fraction of the electricity generated in the natural gas-dominated state.



Louisiana solar farms could see millions in incentives. Some votes head to rural residents.

Among the successful proposals was a new law sponsored by state Sen. Bret Allain to require the state Department of Natural Resources to craft regulations for the solar industry, which prompted one of the hearings Tuesday.

“Property owners absolutely have the right to lease their property for whatever they want to,” said Allain, a landowner and sugarcane farmer from Franklin. “But I think it’s on us to make sure it’s done correctly and with the least amount of impact and protecting the environment and communities they’re in.”

Sen. Beth Mizell, R-Franklinton, also passed a resolution calling for a public hearing on the topic. Mizell, who represents Washington Parish, where local officials have put a moratorium on new solar projects, has been one of the most outspoken critics of the solar projects that have popped up in the state.

“Before we move forward with giving an industry unbridled opportunity in our state, there (needs to be) regulations,” Mizell said.

The biggest concern driving the pushback appears to be the newfound competition Louisiana farmers are facing in leasing land. Jim Simon, of the American Sugarcane League, said many farmers “operate at the mercy of landowners,” and that solar projects can shutter sugar mills or farms if they take enough land in a certain area. Solar developers can often pay more per acre for land than farmers.

Proponents of solar say the fears that solar projects will take big chunks of agricultural land out of farmers’ hands are largely unfounded. While developers are negotiating options contracts for land, most projects will not come to fruition. A representative of the Public Service Commission said at one of the hearings that solar energy, which provides a miniscule fraction of the electricity generated in Louisiana, has a natural ceiling because the state needs backup power when the sun isn’t shining.

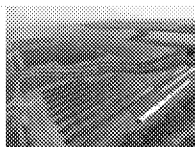
Stephen Wright, executive director of Gulf States Renewable Energy Industry Association, said plenty of states have established “extensive rules”

for solar projects that could easily be adopted in Louisiana. For instance, some states require developers to put up bonds to ensure the projects will be decommissioned at the end of their life. Allain suggested that will be a key part of the rules.

“We don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” Wright said, cautioning officials with the DNR not to put “punitive” restrictions on the industry.

Wilson Lagraize, an accountant in Washington Parish who is part of a group of “concerned citizens” in the area, questioned whether the solar projects are worth what he sees as risks. He claimed solar projects raise health and environmental questions.

Solar projects, like almost any large capital-intensive project, have for years been eligible for the state’s generous Industrial Tax Exemption Program for manufacturers. But a resolution passed by House Speaker Clay Schexnayder asks the board that doles out those tax breaks to halt them for solar projects until next year.



'I thought we were an oil and gas state': Solar developments in Louisiana draw increased scrutiny

“Is it worth us giving up those revenues and have all the risks of environmental hazards, health hazards...is it worth it?” Lagraize said. “Frankly, I don’t think it is in Washington Parish.”

The development that has Franklinton residents up in arms is a solar project on 440 acres of property at the LSU AgCenter's Southeast Research Station, which LSU leased to a private developer called Iris Solar, LLC in 2016. LSU AgCenter spokesperson Frances Gould said the LSU AgCenter turned to leasing the property out to minimize the effects of steep budget cuts implemented by lawmakers in the 2000s. The project is expected to be completed in August.

"The (request for proposals) outlined the AgCenter’s intent to further its mission through research, extension and teaching opportunities while continuing dairy research operations at the Southeast Research Station in Franklinton, Louisiana," Gould said.

Mark Yates, vice president of the Advanced Power Alliance, which represents renewable energy developers, said many solar projects become top taxpayers in rural areas. That’s because they pay sales taxes and property taxes on the equipment.

With the industrial tax exemption, developers pay just 20% of the property taxes they would otherwise owe 10 years.

“I understand the apprehension,” Yates said. “It is new. And there is a lot of education that needs to be done at the local level and the state level.”

Staff writer Kristen Mosbruck